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CAN WE MAKE A GREEN TOURISM BRAND? THE EVIDENCE OF MACEDONIA

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Abstract

Every country has strengths and weaknesses and a good brand may project a country's strengths while recognizing its weaknesses. Despite the fact that Macedonia has been an independent state for more than two decades, it seems that it is still trapped in its transition period and still strives for creation of some new patterns. The article draws on primary and secondary data to provide insights into the processes and conflicts over efforts to create a green tourism brand in Macedonia. Moreover, the research assesses how Macedonian hospitality industry stakeholders manage the environmental quality, which directly leads to increase of destination's competitiveness. It has a practical significance since it discusses the level of environmental quality of Macedonia as a base for creating a national green tourism brand. The paper underlines that tourism branding in Macedonia cannot be conducted successfully without considering the context of "green" tourism. It was found that the improved image along with the enhanced competitiveness are strong determinants, provoking better interest than the increase of number of guests. Yet, large number of surveyed hotel managers lack measures to reduce the conventional energy use and replace it with renewable sources of energy. Although being fully aware of the importance of the environmental concept, this is not the managerial priority of Macedonian hotels. These findings may assist in further steps when creating marketing strategies to enhance country's distinctiveness. A positive national image is an essential ingredient for promotion that raises the issue for necessity of investing into national branding as part of the image-building strategy.

Keywords: Environment; Image; Promotion; Brand; Green tourism.

